ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ / RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE DISCURSIVE LEGITIMATION OF THE EU-TURKEY REFUGEE DEAL IN EUROPEAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This study explores the legitimation strategies employed in European political discourse on EU's migration cooperation with Turkey. More specifically, this paper elucidates factors that shape argumentation in European parliamentary debates on 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, also known as the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal. Adopting an interdisciplinary research methodology rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis and using analytical tools of Cognitive Linguistics, this study aims to provide empirical insights into the legitimation of migration and asylum policies. This study connects to the growing body of literature on discursive legitimation in an attempt to extend the existing set of categories of legitimation proposed in earlier studies.

Keywords: EU-Turkey Refugee Deal, Discursive Legitimation, Critical Discourse Analysis

JEL Classification: F22, F50, F59

Öz

Bu makale Avrupa Birliği'nin Türkiye'yle düzensiz göç alanında sürdürdüğü iş birliği girişimlerinin Avrupa siyasal söyleminde meşru kılınmasında rol oynayan söylemsel stratejileri incelemektedir. Makalede AB-Türkiye Mülteci Anlaşması olarak da bilinen 18 Mart 2016 tarihli sözleşmeye ilişkin Avrupa Parlamentosu'nda yürütülen tartışmalar analiz edilmektedir. Çalışmada, kuramsal olarak 'Eleştirel Söylem Analizi'ne bina edilmiş ve Bilişsel Dilbilimin analiz araçlarını da kullanan disiplinlerarası bir araştırma yöntemi kullanılmaktadır. Makalenin nihai amacı AB'nin göç ve iltica politikalarına meşruiyet kazandırılmasında önemli rol oynayan söylemsel araç ve stratejilere ışık tutmaktır. Makale, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi yazınında giderek daha fazla yer tutan söylemsel meşruiyet araştırmalarına eklemlenerek göç ve mülteci politikaları örneğinde yeni bulgular sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: AB-Türkiye Mülteci Anlaşması, Söylemsel Meşruiyet Stratejileri, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi

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1. Introduction

Following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, millions of refugees left this country to reach Europe through Turkey, with the ultimate aim of seeking asylum in prosperous members of the European Union (EU). Perceiving the rising number of asylum seekers as a matter of border security, the EU responded to the so-called 'Europe's refugee crisis' by adopting exclusionary practice and policies, and securitization of refugee issues. A number of policy initiatives that are brought to life in close cooperation with neighbouring transit countries, including Turkey, remained at the core of the EU's response (see Carrera, Blockmans, Gros & Guild, 2015; Tekin, 2017, 2019). EU-Turkey cooperation or 'partnership' on migration management started with the 2013 EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement signed on 16 December 2013. The refugee movement towards Europe through Turkey, however, accelerated after the signing of this agreement and reached its peak in the summer of 2015. Rising refugee movements triggered a severe humanitarian crisis, with over 3770 recorded drownings in the Mediterranean Sea in this year (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2015). In an attempt to end drownings and curb the number of refugees and migrants incoming to Greek islands, the EU accelerated efforts to sustain closer migration management cooperation with Turkey. For this aim, Turkey and the EU initiated a "Joint Action Plan" in 2015 to ensure effective implementation of the 2013 Readmission Agreement. This Joint Plan, however, failed to reduce the number of asylum seekers crossing the Aegean Sea to reach Europe through a perilous journey. The EU increased pressures on the Turkish government to convince Turkey to cooperate more in migration-related matters, to enhance border security measures, and to readmit all irregular migrants crossing the border. As a result, on 18 March 2016, Turkey and the EU announced a new plan, the "EU-Turkey Statement", commonly known as the "EU-Turkey Refugee Deal". This new plan was framed as a bold step in migration cooperation between the two partners.

From the 2013 Readmission Agreement to the 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, migration cooperation with Turkey was a cumbersome political decision for EU policy-makers. This was primarily because of Turkey's reluctance to accept the proposed measures. But it was also because Turkey, while party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, maintains a geographical limitation and grants refugee status only to asylum seekers originating from Europe. The deal was thus on thin ice from an international and EU law perspective (see Provera, 2016). Furthermore, negotiations between the two signatories of the Statement were conducted on "a purely transactional basis" (Saatçioğlu, 2021, p. 816). The EU offered various incentives so as to persuade the Turkish government to actively cooperate with the EU common migration and asylum policy; that is, to adopt a stricter border control regime, consent to readmit migrants, and contain millions of refugees for an indefinite time on its soil. Incentives offered by the EU included revitalisation of the EU membership negotiations, a possible modernisation of the 1995 EU-Turkey Customs Union, as well as the provision of financial assistance under the EU Facility for Refugees that amounts to 6 billion euros. As a result of the combined effect of these elements of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal, perceived as 'compromises' given to Turkish government, migration cooperation with Turkey has quickly turned to be a most controversial issue, triggering EU-wide heated debates, in the public sphere, among the ordinary citizens, in the media, and at the level of political elites, in national parliaments and the European Parliament. Migration cooperation

with Turkey has also become an electoral issue in local, national, and European elections. For many observers, the perceived threat of uncontrolled arrival of migrants and refugees, and furthering of migration cooperation with Turkey, were among the primary reasons behind the United Kingdom's decision to leave the EU following a nation-wide referendum.

On the sixth anniversary of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal, mass arrival of asylum-seekers, migrants, and refugees, Syrian and non-Syrian, still haunts the EU. Debates on migration cooperation with Turkey resurged sporadically on top of the EU political agenda over the course of the past few years. Important incidents that brought migration cooperation with Turkey successive times on top of the EU's political agenda include the opening of borders by Turkish government in February-March 2020; the coming to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of the United States and allied armed forces, and the Autumn 2021 refugee crisis at the Belarus-Poland border. Franco-British disputes on who should be held responsible for the humanitarian crisis in the Calais-Dover border region, where asylum-seekers wait in miserable conditions before crossing the English Channel, also fuelled EU-wide debates on migration and asylum policy. Today, migration cooperation with Turkey still remains on top of the EU's political agenda, shaping European politics at the national and supranational levels. Stark disagreements over the conduct of the common migration and asylum policy still cast a shadow on the Schengen Area and EU politics. These disputes do not only make it visible the divisions and fault lines existing within the EU, between the core and peripheral members (see Tekin, 2017, 2019). Deep and persistent disagreements also continue to feed Euroscepticism, populist politics, xenophobia, and ordinary racism within the EU.

This study explores the legitimation strategies employed in EU political discourse on migration cooperation with Turkey. More specifically, this article examines factors that shape argumentation in EU political discourse on migration and asylum policies, in the context of European parliamentary debates on the 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement, often referred to as the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal. Adopting an interdisciplinary methodology anchored theoretically in Discourse-Historical approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and employing analytical tools of Cognitive Linguistics (see Tekin, 2010), this study aims to provide fresh empirical insights into legitimation of migration and asylum policies. This study connects to the recently growing body of theoretical and empirical literature on discursive legitimation of policies, in an attempt to extend the existing set of categories of legitimation proposed in previous studies. This study elucidates the role of a range of rhetorical and linguistic devices, such as argumentative topoi, fallacies, counterfactuals, metonymies, and metaphors. Throughout the analysis a particular emphasis is also placed on the role representation strategies, commonly-shared beliefs, half-truths and presuppositions play in EU political discourse in substantiating legitimation.

Data for this study comes from a survey of EU political discourse on EU-Turkey migration partnership, which mainly includes statements by heads of state and prime ministers, members of parliament, members of European Parliament and top-level EU bureaucrats. For this aim, I studied the European Parliament's two plenary sessions directly related to migration cooperation with Turkey, held in Strasburg on February 2, and April 13, 2016. I have also surveyed official websites

of EU institutions, namely, that of the EU Commission and European Parliament, for selected periods, so as to identify and study speeches and press declarations by EU bureaucrats and politicians made after important related events, such as the 7 March 2016 meeting of the EU heads of state or government with Turkey. Periods surveyed as part of the study include January-June 2016 (that is, three months before and after the signing of the 18 March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement), February-May 2020 (to cover the February 2020 Greek-Turkish border incidents), and July – December 2021 (to cover the Belarus-Poland border incidents). For surveying statements of the German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was one of the chief drivers of the EU-Turkey refugee deal, I have used the search engine provided on the official website of the German Federal Chancellor.

Research questions of the study can now be stated as follows: (i) How does the EU political discourse legitimize the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal? How was this border management, readmission and migration governance regime justified and legitimized in the discourse of its designers and supporters? How was the deal delegitimized in the discourse of its opponents? (ii) What are the discursive strategies and rhetorical devices used for legitimation (and/or delegitimation) of migration cooperation with Turkey? A major hypothesis tested in the present study is that discursive legitimation strategies are characterised by a high level of interdiscursivity and intertextuality, and directly relate to discursive constructions of identity.

This article is organised around three sections. In the first section, I provide an overview of the literature stream investigating discursive legitimation, placing a particular focus on studies on legitimation of migration and asylum policies. In this section, I also present categories of legitimation that provide the basis of the critical analysis provided in the study. Next, in the second section, a critical analysis of legitimation of the EU-Turkey refugee deal is carried out. In this section the article presents existing and new categories for the analysis of discursive legitimation of migration and asylum policies. The third and final section of the article briefly comments on the findings of this research and provides concluding remarks.

2. Discursive Legitimation

'Legitimation' [also referred to as 'Legitimization'] is an old concept in discourse studies that dates back to Aristotelian rhetorical analysis (see Vaara, 2014, p. 502). It mainly refers to the "process by which speakers accredit or license a type of social behavior", and a search for "justification of a behavior (mental or physical)," or a certain policy decision (Reyes, 2011, p. 782). According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), legitimation can be defined as an attempt to provide "the 'explanations' and justifications" of the constitutive parts of an "institutional order", either "by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings," or by "giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives" (p. 111). In its simplest form, legitimation can be defined in relation to the following questions faced by all policy/decision-makers:

~ "How shall/must I act and why?"

~ "Why should we do this?"

~ "Why should we do this in this particular way?"

Any discursive attempt, strategy, or move aiming at bringing an answer to the above questions, either explicitly, or in an implicit way, can therefore be understood as legitimation (see Van Leeuwen, 2007). Vaara (2014) further accentuates on the fact that legitimation strategies are highly 'context-dependent' since legitimation is about manufacturing "a sense of positive, beneficial, ethical, understandable, necessary or otherwise acceptable action in a '*specific setting*'" (p. 503; emphasis is mine, also see Van Dijk, 1998; Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999; Reyes, 2018). Paying attention to the context is therefore of utmost importance while studying processes of legitimation.[1]

Within Critical Discourse Studies literature, a substantial amount of effort was made in the past few decades to develop a systematic approach for studying the ways in which legitimation is handled in discourse. Four key categories of discursive legitimation are proposed in the pioneering works of Theo Van Leeuwen (1996, 2007). Table 1 provides a summary of these four key categories.

Table 1: Four Key Categories of Discursive Legitimation Proposed by Van Leeuwen (2007)

1. **Authorization** – "Legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom and law, and of persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested" (Van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 92).
2. **Moral evaluation** – "Legitimation by (often very oblique) reference to value systems" (Van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 92).
3. **Rationalization** – Legitimation by reference to common sense, or scientific or social knowledge. Rationalization may be attempted with reference to major religions, belief systems, and ideologies (Van Leeuwen, 2007, pp. 103-105; also see Berger & Luckmann, 1966).
4. **Mythopoesis** – Legitimation is achieved through storytelling which is often selected fragments of narratives, or small stories about past or a hypothetical future (see Van Leeuwen, 2007, pp. 105-107).

Van Leeuwen's categories listed above have been applied in a series of previous studies on discursive legitimation of policy decisions, including, Rojo and Van Dijk (1997); Reyes (2011); Vaara (2014); Van Dijk (2005); Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999), and Wodak (2017), among others. Some of these works exclusively focused on discursive legitimation of migration policies (Van Leeuwen and Wodak, 1999; Rojo and Van Dijk, 1997; Wodak, 2017) while others studied legitimation of war (Van Dijk, 2005; Reyes, 2011) or austerity measures implemented during a financial crisis (Vaara, 2014).

On the basis of Van Leeuwen's categories, Reyes (2011) proposed the following 'key strategies' that play a significant role in discursive legitimization of migration and asylum policies:

1. Legitimization through Emotions (particularly fear),

2. Legitimization through a Hypothetical Future,

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1   We can then define 'delegitimation', as any discursive strategy or act to create in a given context, "a sense of negative, morally reprehensible or otherwise unacceptable action or overall state of affairs" (Vaara, 2014, p. 503; also see Rojo & Van Dijk, 1997).

3.   Legitimization through Rationality,

4.   Legitimization through Voices of Expertise, and

5.   Legitimization through Altruism.

A similar taxonomy is employed by Vaara (2014) who studied legitimation of fiscal policy measures and financial austerity programmes adopted during the Eurozone crisis in the southern members of the EU. In addition to the categories/strategies listed above, Vaara (2014) proposed new categories; most importantly, "legitimation through cosmology", "inevitability", or "the lack of a viable alternative". In this discursive strategy, the so-called 'Troika' (composed of the EU Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund) legitimizes neoliberal austerity programmes pressurised on crisis-hit Eurozone countries by constructing these measures as the only feasible policy alternative. Legitimation through cosmology is accomplished when policy-makers construct the proposed policy decision as 'inevitable', and strategically insist that there is no other viable alternative (see Vaara, 2014, p. 513-514).

By all means, discursive legitimation is first and foremost related to argumentation; a process "enacted by argumentation, that is, by providing arguments that explain our social actions, ideas, thoughts, declarations, etc." (Reyes, 2011, p. 782). Legitimation, however, also directly relates to other discursive strategies; such as predication, lexicalisation, nomination, or mitigation. For studying legitimation, it is also indispensable to study how (at the macro level) authority and legitimacy are created and enforced through a certain speech event; and how exactly, that is through which rhetorical devices, authority and legitimacy are negotiated (at the micro level) by interlocutors (see Rojo & Van Dijk, 1997). Discursive legitimation, furthermore, is always closely connected to the political stance and ideology of discourse participants. For studying discursive legitimation of migration and asylum policy, one therefore needs to adopt a multidimensional, multileveled research methodology that allows systematic analysis of speech acts while paying attention to ideology and power relations underlying discourse. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) presents a most suitable methodological approach for the systematic analysis of discursive legitimation (see Vaara, 2014; Van Dijk, 1998; Van Leeuwen, 2007). This study adopts a research methodology which combines Discourse-Historical Approach to Critical Discourse analysis (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001) with Cognitive Linguistics (Chilton, 2019; Hart, 2010). This methodology pays exclusive attention to the contextual background, as well as the interdiscursivity and intertextuality, and ideological underpinnings of political discourse (see Tekin, 2010).

3. Analysis of Discursive Legitimation of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal

At the macro level, EU political discourse on migration partnership with Turkey rests on a number of 'discourse themes', or 'topics'. These include, most importantly; (i) Turkey's safe country status, closely related with the topic of whether Turkey is a reliable partner, (ii) the legality of proposed measures, that is, conformance of the statement to EU law and international refugee law, (iii) the limits of responsibility to protect, and solidarity, and (iv) financial, and also normative, ideational

costs of migration governance (see Tekin, 2019). These topics provide the main axes around which EU political discourse on migration cooperation with Turkey is organised. Each of these themes occupies a central place in European parliamentary debates, and further plays a critical role in shaping argumentation in the discourse of both the proponents of and opponents of the proposed border control, migration management, and readmission regime.

In this research, I have identified a number of prevalent legitimation and delegitimation strategies firmly grounded on the above-mentioned discourse themes for sustaining particular discursive (argumentation, nomination, predication, mitigation) functions. The Table 2 provided at the end of this section presents a visual summary of legitimation and delegitimation strategies whose main aim is to recommend, legitimate, or justify migration management cooperation with Turkey.

3.1. Neoliberal rationalization: legitimization through economic rationality

> "*If we achieved more orderly cooperation in Europe, the dimension of the challenges would be even smaller than at present. This can be seen in the case of the highly controversial Turkey deal, which has made a major contribution towards reducing the number of refugees coming to Europe. The agreement costs money, but it is money well invested*" (Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, *Welt am Sonntag*, 30 December 2018).[2]

In EU political discourse, migration cooperation with Turkey, in general, and the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal, in particular, is frequently constructed as a rewarding 'rational economic decision'. Economic rationality appears to be widespread in discourses whose main aim is to recommend, legitimate, or justify an exclusionary migration policy. Alongside with securitization, rationalizations concentrating on economic arguments provide an effective semantic strategy of argumentation to make comments on the ongoing humanitarian crisis at the EU borders. In EU political discourse, this is often done with open reference to 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency' (to the search for an 'efficient' and 'gainful' use of scarce resources), and a 'rational' assessment of the 'costs and benefits' of the deal. Designers and proponents of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal often resort to neoliberal arguments in order to legitimate the plan as the least-cost, most efficient, most profitable alternative. The utterances of the President of European Commission presented above exemplify the widespread use of such economic rationality, which, more than often, involves the use of number and finance topoi.[3]

In the above quote and many other similar statements in European parliamentary debates, one can identify distinctive elements of neoliberal ideology and market-driven logic and discourse. It is highly remarkable that although EU asylum policy is not necessarily a policy domain characterised by economic relations and priorities, proponents of the refugee deal with Turkey often base their

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2   https://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article186298844/Jean-Claude-Juncker-We-shouldn-t-agree-with-the-populists-but-confront-them-instead.html

3   For argumentative topoi in political discourse see Wodak (2009). For the role a wide range of argumentative topoi play in discursive legitimation of migration policy, see Wodak (2017).

arguments on cost-cutting, and efficiency-seeking, and frame the issue as a matter of economic rationality. Rather than framing the issue as related to innate rights of human beings, including the right to flee persecution; European political discourse reproduces a certain 'economics rationale' and promotes neoliberal governmentality based on the predominance of market mechanisms. This is why the main tone of discursive legitimation of migration and asylum policies in European political discourse can be understood as neoliberal.

3.2. Legitimation through the (Counterfactual) Claim of Temporariness

This study finds that EU political discourse recurrently employs a strategy of accentuating the 'temporary' or 'provisional' character of the proposed measures for justifying this controversial policy initiative. A widespread discursive legitimation strategy in European parliamentary debates is to construct the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal as a transitory emergency measure taken in the face of an 'unprecedented crisis':

> "[…] *we should recognise that the deal with Turkey is at best a provisional, fragile and controversial solution. What we really need are European instruments to regain control of the situation, of our territory and of our standards, and this means very clear priorities […]. What is at stake is no less than European sovereignty. We should not be afraid of using these words. This is a powerful concept, and most citizens do understand that we need to move to this new phase of building the means to have sovereignty over our resources, our territory and our standards. I believe this should be envisaged also as a big investment, so let us prepare for this new stage.*" (Maria João Rodrigues, European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

The claim of temporariness plays a strategic legitimation function in the discourse of the proponents of the agreement. As evidenced in utterances above, the refugee deal is framed as a practical, intermediary solution, establishing an interim regime before a proper 'European' solution can be provided. Here, it should be noted that framing a deal with long-lasting effects on refugees and asylum seekers as a short-term, provisional measure also represents a typical example of the strategic use of misinformation and manipulation in discursive legitimation of migration and asylum policies.[4] This untrue claim of temporariness legitimates the unconventional border management and refugee readmission plan by presenting it as a hasty attempt and temporary measure to cope with an emergency.

> "*It was necessary to conclude quickly an agreement between the EU and Turkey on migrant flows. In prevailing circumstances the agreement is the best arrangement possible. However, the strategic flaws inherent in it should be recognised.*" (Alfred Sant, European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

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4 Deliberate use of false or misleading information is also often combined with various (logical) fallacies and counterfactuals, argumentative strategies with well-studied functions in political discourse (See Van der Valk, 2003; Van Dijk, 1997).

The strategy of making references to the exceptional state of affairs, or 'prevailing circumstances', as exemplified in the above quote by a Member of European Parliament, serves to better accentuate on the presumed unprecedentedness and urgency of the case at hand. Such misleading or manipulative argumentation strategies serve proponents of the deal to moderate its negative aspects and deficiencies. Legitimation through the spurious claim of temporariness does not only help policy-makers to advocate more effectively in favour of the controversial deal. This discursive legitimation strategy also reduces the risks and problems associated with this policy decision, into minor details that can be conveniently ignored. In this respect, this strategy also represents an example to legitimation through instrumental rationalization focusing on goals and means orientation (see Van Leeuwen, 2007, pp. 101-102; also see Wodak, 2017, p. 45).

3.3. Legitimation through the Construction of an Existential Threat, or Danger

The appeal to emotions (particularly that of fear, or more correctly that of the fear of the Other(s)) allows policy makers to shape the opinion of the audience (see Chilton, 2004; Rheindorf & Wodak, 2018). Policy legitimation in our case is also achieved by the discursive construction of the rising asylum demands as an existential threat or danger. For this aim, the incoming of Syrian refugees is openly declared as threatening the Schengen Area, the European welfare state, the order within the EU, European sovereignty, or European integration, altogether. In this vein, migrants and refugees incoming to the EU are also constructed at the level of discourse as presenting an impending danger for members of the EU in-group – – member states or citizens – – and, therefore, threatening the European 'culture', or 'identity'. The following quotes present excellent examples for such discursive legitimation strategies prevailing in European Parliamentary discourse on migration cooperation with Turkey:

> *"[…] I think we can all agree that the migration crisis last year was probably the single biggest catastrophe to hit the European Union in its history. In fact, I would go as far as to say that it has put the very existence of this project in jeopardy. What is amazing is that the EU's own actions helped cause the problem in the first place. When Chancellor Merkel and the Swedish Government committed the equivalent of cultural suicide and invited everyone who had a Syrian passport to come to the continent, it was obvious to all of us what was going to happen. People would attempt to come in their droves, people would die in the seas, there would be migrant camps overflowing, Member State would be pitted against Member State, the Schengen Agreement would collapse, and it would be a golden opportunity for the Islamic fundamentalists to bring carnage to our continent […]. We are facing a summer where the movement of people from the Middle East and North Africa will no doubt reach biblical proportions."* (Paul Nuttall, European Parliament, 2 February 2016).

> *"[…] last week Frontex guards dressed up like paramilitary forces and deported 200 migrants from Greece: clearly a staged show of force to pretend the EU Turkey blackmail deal*

is a success. The same day as 200 migrants were deported, another 300 entered Greece. Do you really believe the people are being fooled so easily? The truth is that since the blackmail deal, another 5000 migrants have been smuggled into Greece. We had a million migrants enter the EU last year alone. How are you going to hold back the next tsunami of migrants?" (Janice Atkinson, European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

The quotes above, and many other similar utterances in European parliamentary debates, reveal that the discursive legitimation of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal goes hand in hand with discursive securitization of migration and refugees. The play with emotions, particularly that of the fear of Other(s) is accomplished either by openly announcing refugees and migrants as a threat or danger, or in an implicit way, through metonymies and metaphors. This research identified a wide use of metonymies per person ('aliens', 'document forgers', 'foreign criminals', 'rapists', 'thousands', 'millions' for migrants), metonymies per action ('flood', 'hurricane', 'tsunami' for human mobility), and the metonymic use of 'jungle', 'frontline' for Greek-Turkish borders and the 'continent' for the EU.[5] In European discourse, one can see the strategic role the 'topos of danger', 'topos of number', and the 'topos of usefulness' play in legitimation of the exclusionary migration and border control regime established in cooperation with Turkey. The following utterances shed light on how these argumentative topoi are combined together for discursive delegitimation purposes:

"*[…] there is a saying that when you play with fire, you have to expect to get burnt. I have to tell you that my impression is that this is exactly what is happening now with the Turkey deal. […] let us not fool ourselves. It is true: you say the deal is working. On the Greek-Turkish border, yes. There are no longer 1700 a day but 50 a day now. But yesterday the Italian coastguard rescued not 50 people, as normal, but 2154 people. So what is the result of yesterday? We can only take yesterday's figures. People like to talk about figures here and about the deal. Well, they are the figures – from 1700 to 50, and from 50 to 2154. Is that a deal that is working?*" (Guy Verhofstadt, Member of European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

My textual data also shows that legitimation/delegitimation of migration and refugee policy is often accomplished through conceptual/cognitive metaphors; most importantly, metaphors of aggression and violence ('blackmail', 'carnage', 'jeopardy'), natural catastrophe ('fire', 'sinking', 'tsunami'), war ('conquest', 'invasion', 'sabotage'), container ('train', 'boat', 'ship') and house and family metaphors. As Wodak (2017) noted, remarkably in my case, discourses of cultural difference overlap with discourses about security in legitimation of migration policy (p.41) and the 'topos of culture' finds a wide use in these intersections.

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5   For these, and other types of metonymies commonly employed in political discourse on immigration and migrant populations, see Catalano and Musolff (2019).

3.4. Legitimation through Mythopoesis

Van Leeuwen (1996, 2007) correctly notes that discursive legitimation is often accomplished through the construction of a future scenario via carefully selected fragments of narratives. In my textual data I have identified 'Mythopoesis' to represent a widespread strategy. In several instances in European parliamentary debates, interlocutors are engaged in selected storytelling so as to better accentuate presumed risks, costs and benefits of securing (or failing to secure) cooperation with Turkey on migration management.

This research also finds that these selected narratives accentuate 'essential', 'insurmountable' differences between the Self and the Other(s), including migrants and refugees, and the Turkish Other. Turkey's non-European identity and Otherness constitute a major schematic category in EU political discourses whose main aim is to justify or legitimate migration management cooperation with this country. As a result, the debate on cooperation with Turkey on migration and refugee matters turned into a debate on how Turkey has always been, and still remains, utterly different; an outsider which is definitely not part of the European in-group.[6] In such narratives, one can observe how the essential, 'cultural' difference of Turkey juxtapose hypothetical future scenarios and shapes legitimation/delegitimation of sustaining migration cooperation with this country:

> "[…] *Turkish accession to the EU is important in its own right but is especially so now in the light of the UK referendum. Immigration alone makes this a contentious issue as Turkey, which has been trying to join the EU for many years, is allowing Erdoğan to blackmail the EU into accelerating the process. Turkey is not even part of Europe. Ninety-seven per cent of it is in Asia, and although like us it has a history that shares the glories of Greece, Rome and the Italian Renaissance, it is not part of European culture. Under Atatürk Turkey became a secular nation, but more recently it has been moving towards Islamism as it was practised in the 6th century. Does the EU really want Turkey as a member? What will accession mean? We do not even know for certain what the true population is – figures range from 75 to 79 million. Turkey is also home to millions of refugees who could, in the future, be given a Turkish passport. When Turkey becomes a member of the EU all these people will have the right to come to Britain.*" (Julia Reid, European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

The consequentialist argumentation and rationalization (see Vaara, 2014, pp. 511, 513) in the above utterances show us how legitimation is conveyed through future projections. In the discourse of Paul Nuttall, a right-wing member of the European Parliament from Britain's UK Independence Party, this hypothetical future has already been taking shape and the 2015-2016 New Year sexual assaults in Cologne are just a "taster of what is to come":

> "*Yes, I think that when Angela Merkel said that Germany would accept everyone who could prove that they were Syrian, a huge number of people came, and that is why fake*

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6   On this matter, and for an analysis of representations of Turkey in the narratives on refugee crisis, see Tekin (2019).

> *Syrian passports are now on sale on the Turkish black market for EUR 500 a go. That is why one in three people who turn up and say they are Syrian in Germany turn out to have fake passports. What you are doing is putting European citizens' lives at risk. In fact, you saw what happened in Cologne recently and I am telling you now that is a taster of what is to come across our continent."* (Paul Nuttall, European Parliament, 2 February 2016).

Legitimation through storytelling is characterised by a wide use of metaphors and metonymies and coincides with the securitization of migration and refugee policy. In narratives told in European parliamentary debates one observes plenty of references to the presumed incompatibility of European and refugees' (non-European) 'values' or 'cultures'. When speakers in the European Parliament construct "nightmare" future projections where Europe turns into '*Eurabia*', or millions of refugees flood to the EU with passports provided by an EU-member Turkey in a hypothetical future, they actually emphasise the 'topos of culture' for legitimation purposes.

A major finding of this study is the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of discourse strategies whose main aim is to legitimate (or delegitimate) migration management cooperation with Turkey. This study finds that discursive legitimation of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal often relates to a number of significant discourse events, such as turning points or crises in Turkey-EU relations, Turkey's EU membership candidacy, or the 2015-2016 terrorist attacks, and sexual harassments 'committed by migrants' in various European cities. These events, which are (albeit important) not immediately related to the proposed policy initiative, reveal the interdiscursive basis of discursive legitimation of migration and asylum policy. The above quotes that construct Turkey as a blackmailing, threatening entity situated in Asia, and refugees as opportunists, counterfeiters, and potential sexual harassers show us the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of discursive legitimation through mythopoesis.

The widespread, manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity that prevail in European Parliament's plenary sessions on the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal significantly enhance persuasion and contribute to the discursive legitimation of the proposed exclusionary border and migration management regime. Discourses that recontextualise sexual attacks in 2015/2016 Cologne New Year events, or bombings and terrorist attacks in Paris, Berlin and Brussels while trying to legitimate the EU-Turkey refugee deal aim to underline migrants' unlawful, aggressive and violent character. Such legitimation strategies however also perform another distinct discursive function which is the delineation of the in – and out-groups. Previous studies evidenced that while legitimizing migration and asylum policies, policy-makers often resort to argumentation strategies such as negative representation of the Other and positive representation of the Self in an attempt to justify exclusion and discrimination of migrants and asylum seekers (see Wodak, 2001, p. 72; Rojo & Van Dijk, 1997, pp. 539-540; and Wodak, 2001). This research confirms this to be rampant in the case of discursive legitimation of EU-Turkey Refugee Deal. European political discourse does not only carefully delineate in – and out-groups as Europeans and migrants and refugees. It also attributes certain qualities, features and characteristics to the members of the in – and out-groups, through carefully selected nomination and predication strategies. More than often, this is done by comparison and contrasts, through several topoi, including the use of the 'topos of comparison' and the 'topos of culture' that altogether

support binary oppositions between the peaceful, rule-abiding members of the European in-group vs. violent, unlawful members of the refugee out-group in a way that feeds the fear of the outsiders (see Chilton, 2004, pp. 114-115; Reyes, 2011, pp. 785-786).

3.5. Legitimation through Altruism and Solidarity

Legitimation through altruism is by far one of the most widely employed legitimation strategy in our case. Remarkably, EU's common migration policy and cooperation with Turkey were legitimised in EU political discourse primarily as an attempt to help others, a selfless concern for other people, as evidenced in the following utterances of two prominent figures of European politics:

> "*I am firmly convinced that it [the refugee deal] is in the interest of Germany, of Europe and of Turkey, and by the way also very much in the interest of the affected people who are fleeing war and persecution, to protect them from continuing to fall into the hands of people smugglers. […] We should give refugees a chance to find protection as close as possible to their homes.*" (Angela Merkel, German Federal Chancellor, Interview, Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, 22 May 2016)[7].

> "*For us, refugees are specific people, individuals, who expect our help. There are forces around us however, for whom the wave of refugees is just dirty business or a political bargaining chip. We are slowly becoming witnesses to the birth of a new form of political pressure, and some even call it a kind of a new hybrid war, in which migratory waves have become a tool, a weapon against neighbours.*" (Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, 23 September 2015.)

Legitimation through altruism goes hand in hand with another closely related discursive strategy, legitimation through solidarity, whose main aim is to justify migration management cooperation with Turkey. Solidarity has found multiple uses in discourses whose main aim is to justify the proposed migration management and border control regime. In EU political discourse, the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal is legitimated as an act of Solidarity with (i) EU members (primarily with the heavily-burdened 'frontline' countries such as Greece) and (ii) asylum seekers fleeing a brutal regime.

> "*Acting in this spirit, we must remember that the Balkan route is not the only one, and that other countries will also expect our cooperation and solidarity, not only Greece and Bulgaria. I have in mind here the Central Mediterranean route. The numbers of would-be migrants in Libya are alarming. This means that we must be prepared to help and show solidarity to Malta and Italy, should they request it.*" (Donald Tusk, President of the European Parliament, 13 April, 2016).

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7   https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/agreement-in-the-interests-of-both-sides-646036

> "*Solidarity is our guiding light as we prepare to reform our common European asylum system. […] Last week the Commission published the options for reform. […] we need to ensure that every man, woman and child receives humane and equal treatment, wherever they are. […] One principle above all will shape our reform: solidarity once again. We cannot abandon any Member State to face a crisis alone.*" (Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

One may also see open/direct references to 'European solidarity' (solidarity among the peoples of Europe), as well as 'cosmopolitan solidarity', or humanitarianism. More than often, this legitimation strategy comes together with legitimation through authorization, as evidenced in frequent references to the EU human rights law, or to Europe's own history as a refugee-hosting continent.

3.6. Legitimation through Moral Evaluation

Wodak (2017) distinguishes two types of moral legitimation; the first is established "on abstract moral values (religious, human rights, justice, culture, and so forth)" while the second is accomplished "by means of straightforwardly evaluative claims" (p. 32). Legitimation through altruism and solidarity can thus both be seen as attempts to justify migration and refugee policy with reference to an abstract, moral order of European society. On the one hand side, in my case, this is often done by reference to some form of authority, by reference to human rights charters, or 'European high values'. However, on the other hand, moralisation of migration and refugee policy and legitimation of the EU-Turkey deal through moral evaluation, also connect to the strategy of appealing to emotions by way of hyperbolic statements in electrifying speeches. In discursive legitimation of the EU's migration and refugee policy, the appeal to emotions is therefore not limited to the fear of the Other(s). This study finds plenty of instances where speakers appeal to the emotion of embarrassment, or shame, in an attempt to legitimate/de-legitimate the deal on the grounds of morality. The following are frequently observed variants of legitimation through moral evaluation identified in my textual data:

- The EU-Turkey refugee deal, or migration management cooperation with Turkey altogether, is a disgrace/shame on us, as it is
    - a concession to an autocratic political leader,
    - a concession in the face of a threat of an outsider entity, or a bullying, autocratic leader using mass migration as a weapon,
    - a concession to blackmail,
    - a violation of international human rights charters,
    - a violation of European values, or Cosmopolitan ideals,

and therefore, shouldn't be accepted on moral grounds.

The following excerpts provide good examples of how delegitimation through moral evaluation is handled in the discourse of members of European Parliament critical to the proposed initiative:

"*The EU-Turkey deal to outsource the refugee problem is a disgrace: the EU is violating human rights and international law by detaining asylum seekers and forcibly deporting them, without even the possibility to ask for asylum, via a Kafkaesque Skype system, which is not operational. [...] Idomeni will remain an ugly scar in our faces as Europeans. [...] By failing to act, you are sinking Europe!*" (Ana Gomes, European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

"*What more can I say except that I feel ashamed, ashamed of being European, and to see values like the right to demand asylum are trampled because European leaders refuse to confront public opinion.*" (Marie-Christine Vergiat, European Parliament, 13 April 2016, original in French).[8]

3.7. Legitimation through the lack of a viable alternative

The EU-Turkey Refugee deal is often presented as a 'partial', 'less-than-ideal' solution in the discourse of its designers and proponents, who then legitimate the proposed plan as the only viable option.

"*We are aware of all the tasks and difficulties in resolving this crisis. From the beginning I have thought it is a dangerous illusion to believe that there exists an ideal and 100%-effective solution. I want to say to all the seekers of the political Holy Grail: you will never find it. Convenient and easy solutions are hard to find in politics, and in this case they are virtually impossible. [...] I hope we will finally understand that Europe does not hold golden keys in its hands to help solve all the problems of this world.*" (Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

"*On migration there is no easy solution. The Turkey deal is not perfect, but it may help. Those in the Schengen zone especially need long-term plans to break the link abused by people-traffickers and to have proper border management systems. But the EU cannot afford to throw endless money or dangle promises of visa-free travel to third countries as some sort of reward for cooperation.*" (Vicky Ford, European Parliament, 13 April 2016).

This study finds that speakers often accentuate on the 'extreme difficulty', or 'near impossibility' of designing a perfect solution to the ongoing humanitarian crisis, framing the proposed measure as the only choice that is viable in the absence of a feasible alternative. This however reduces the possible human rights violations and other problems associated with the deal into minor design flaws which are inevitable and should be neglected. Legitimation through the absence of an alternative thus is often supported by a frequent use of inevitability arguments. Such discursive strategies, however, also

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8   "*Que dire de plus sinon que j'ai honte, honte d'être Européenne, et de voir des valeurs telles que le droit d'asile foulées aux pieds parce que les dirigeants européens refusent d'affronter l'opinion publique.*"

serve to conceal political choices, and the ideological underpinnings of EU's migration and refugee policy.

Table 2: Major Discursive Legitimation Strategies Employed in EU Political Discourse on EU-Turkey Refugee Deal

Legitimation through economic rationality (Neoliberal Rationalization)

~ Mainly through the use of the number and finance topoi

Legitimation through (counterfactual) claims of temporariness

~ Mainly through the use of counterfactuals and argumentative fallacies

Legitimation through the construction of an existential threat or danger

~ Mainly through aggression/natural catastrophe/war/house/family metaphors and threat or danger topoi

Legitimation through a hypothetical future: mythopoesis

~ Mainly through intertextuality/interdiscursivity, as well as representation strategies and various argumentative topoi

Legitimation through altruism and solidarity & Legitimation/Delegitimation through moral evaluation

~ Mainly through the use of topos of authority, topos of humanitarianism, and metaphors [container (train, boat, ship) or house and family metaphors]

Legitimation through the absence of viable alternatives or inevitability

~ Mainly through topos of inevitability, topos of advantage or usefulness and topos of rationality

4. Conclusion

This article has explored discursive legitimation of migration and asylum policies in European political discourse. The analysis elucidates the predominant use, and multiple roles, of the four legitimation strategies (Autorization, Moral Evaluation, Rationalization, and Mythopoesis) already previously identified in the literature. It also discusses new discursive strategies through which legitimation of the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal is accomplished by the designers and supporters of the deal. Findings of this research are in conformance with previous studies on discursive legitimation. However, this research remarkably finds that legitimation and delegitimation are accomplished in similar ways in political discourse; through similar discursive strategies, and the same linguistic/rhetorical devices.

These devices characterising European political discourse on migration management partnership with Turkey include argumentative topoi, metaphors, argumentative fallacies, and counterfactuals.

A major outcome of this research is the role interdiscursivity and intertextuality play in discursive legitimation; particularly in the construction of the fear of Other(s) through selected fragments of narrative. The high prevalence of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in European political discourse on the EU-Turkey Refugee Deal distorts debates on migration and asylum. Such legitimation strategies consequently transform debates on migration and refugee related issues into ones on identity and identity politics. In these debates, interlocutors construct in – and out-groups, and attribute positive values to the (European) Self and negative values to migrants and refugees while legitimating/delegitimating the EU-Turkey refugee deal. Besides their other functions, such binary oppositions characterising European political discourse, serve to accentuate better on the essential/ unsurmountable differences between the Self and the Other(s). Future research should focus on this identity-constitutive impact of legitimation strategies, and the ways legitimation adjoins other discursive strategies, such as argumentation, predication, or nomination.

The study has its limitations. First of all, the analysis focused exclusively on discourse of politicians, members of parliament, heads of state and top-level EU bureaucrats. European debate on migration cooperation with Turkey, however, is a wide one, encompassing all parts of the public sphere, including, most importantly, the media. Media coverage of migration and refugee policies, particularly in the front pages, editorials and commentaries of newspapers should also be considered as political discourse. Studying the media coverage can therefore be a worthwhile exercise for future research as it might allow us to get a better, more comprehensive understanding of discursive patterns and strategies pertaining to migration and asylum policy. It can also be interesting to conduct content or framing analysis and get the descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency such as the mean, median, etc.) of the media to understand frequency distribution of the linguistic/rhetorical/ discursive devices and strategies identified in this study. Further research can therefore help us to identify how the dynamics of discursive legitimation of migration and asylum policy change across the political spectrum.

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